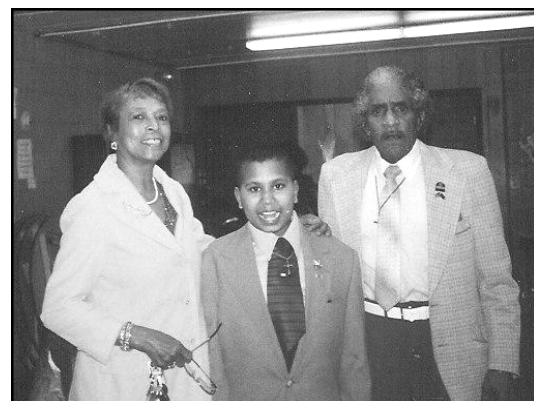


Adopting grand-nephew brings lasting rewards

Hertel Johnson was at the hospital the day his grand-nephew Jonathan was born. He knew right away that the child would need his help if he were to survive. He and his wife Gladys were Jonathan's best hope for a stable family life and successful future. As the doctors tended to Jonathan's physical needs after being exposed to drugs before his birth, the Johnsons nurtured him with love after his birth. That love continues, even 14 years later.

The Johnson house had never been quiet. They always seemed to be taking care of someone's children. Decades ago, they adopted two bi-racial children from Germany who are now grown with families of their own. They also helped raise two of Mrs. Johnson's young siblings. In the early 1980s the family became licensed foster parents in order to care for more kids on a temporary basis. Then came Jonathan, fighting for his life in 1988.



"We had tried to help his mother, to show her about life and to take care of her. She was just a baby herself, having a baby," Johnson recalls of his wife's niece.

Jonathan thrived with the Johnsons, but it was not an easy road. In addition to the physical demands there were also emotional strains.

"There were times when I would get so mad at my niece. I sometimes felt like I wanted put all of Jonathan's problems on her so she could see how he suffered," said Johnson. It was also difficult establishing their family as the primary adults in Jonathan's life. When his birth mother wanted to have input into Jonathan's day-to-day parenting, the Johnsons had to negotiate limits that would be good for Jonathan.

"I had to give her an opportunity to meet our expectations for positive involvement. But she needed to conduct her life and her actions in a way that was going to help Jonathan. It was hard to see that she could not do that," said Johnson.

Over time, as the Johnsons poured themselves into Jonathan, they were able to see the rewards. He was doing well in school. He was not the best, but he was also not the worst. He grew to be an active teen, while his aunt passed on after a long illness. Mrs. Clarice Johnson was willing to pick up the reins of motherhood that came with her recent marriage to Jonathan's uncle. While there are the occasional stumbles in every family, the Johnsons have found rewards even in the smallest things.

"Every morning when I get up, I get a hug and a kiss from Jonathan," said Mr. Johnson. He gets to me even before my wife. Our other son Andre has only been with us for a few months. He says 'Good morning, Papa. How are you feeling?' These words are our reward. This is love."

The Johnsons encourage others to share their love with a child in the same way. Their advice to other relative caregivers is to take the time to become licensed to better learn how to give children what they need.

Foster parents under 40 seeking other younger foster/adoptive parents for support

Foster parenting will always keep you young at heart, but what about those who choose to foster or adopt while they are still young of age? There are some special joys and challenges to parenting a teen who, under other circumstances, would more likely have been a younger sister than a daughter. Some of those “young parents” who have lived this scenario are looking for others to swap stories, hold hands or share resources in an informal gathering.

If you are under 40 years old, live in Cook County and are a foster, adoptive or guardianship parent interested in being a part of this group, please contact the editor. Send an e-mail to foster@chicagonet.net or call Vanessa James at 773-548-3888. If you have an idea of how you would like to be involved or what you would like to see as a future event, please include that information in your message.



DCFS Changes procedures to decrease placement disruptions

In Cook County only, DCFS recently made changes to the timeframes and the decision steps that must come before a change of placement can occur, whether the foster parent or the agency initiates it. The “14-day notice” is a phrase that can mean many things. For a foster parent feeling like they are at the end of their rope, it could be a last cry for help. For a child who has suffered through several moves, it could be a threat leading up to yet another change. For an agency, it might be the warning bell that rang too late. Yet, none of those perspectives leads to a positive, planned outcome that takes into account the best interest of the child and the importance of stability.

In a policy guide released earlier this year, DCFS announced the requirement of a clinical staffing whenever a Notice of Change of Placement (CFS 151B) is issued for any child in traditional and/or relative care in Cook County. The purpose of the clinical placement review is to insure that placement moves are consistent with the child’s best interest and are well-planned, realizing that it may require more than the typical 14-day period. All notices for moves must be copied to the Clinical Placement Review Team by fax at 312-814-1653 with information on the child’s placement history and other supporting documentation.

If the foster parent issues notice to remove a child, the supervising agency must contact the designated local System of Care (SOC) provider within 24 hours. The SOC will then hold a child and family team meeting no later than ten days after the date of the notice. At the meeting with the caregivers, staff and child (if appropriate) the SOC provider will assess the need for and recommend services that could save the placement. If the foster parent is unwilling to accept the services or the SOC provider does not recommend services, the SOC contact will work with staff to support a new placement.

If the foster care agency initiates the placement change, the agency still must contact the Clinical Placement Review Team, which will hold a staffing no later than 10 days after the date of notice. If it is determined that the move is appropriate, the team will make recommendations to support the new placement.

This new policy does not pertain to moves where safety is an immediate concern. It also does not affect approved moves to a specialized foster care placement, independent living program or residential facility. Additionally, moves to bring separated siblings to a single home or a child’s first move to a home of relative will not be subject to the placement review process. More details on the new policy can be found in Policy Guide 2003.01 dated January 24, 2003.

Cook County groups and associations offer advice and assistance

DCFS, private agencies and community initiatives have sponsored many support groups and associations to assist Cook County parents. The following list can help identify a group that may suit your family. This list is a beginning and will be updated. Please contact Nancy Thompson at 217-524-2422 with any corrections or information on other groups that should be listed.

ADA S. MCKINLEY ASSOCIATION

Contact: Gladys Boyd at 312-808-6174
Meets monthly, call for details.

C.H.I.L.D. ASSOCIATION

Contact: Ida Lopez (Support Specialist)
at 708-755-5314
Meets 4th Wednesday (Apr. – Dec.) at 10:00 a.m.
DCFS Harvey Office
15115 Dixie Highway, Harvey

COOK CENTRAL FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

Contact: Adrienne Welenc at 773-292-7700
Meets 4th Tuesday at 9:30 a.m.
DCFS office 3518 W. Division, Chicago, IL

COOK ADVISORY COUNCIL

Contact: Donsetta Blakely at 773-778-7445
Meets 1st Tuesday at 10:00 a.m.
Fernwood Park Fieldhouse
10436 S. Wallace St., Chicago

COOK NORTH REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Contact: Sari Rowitz at 312-328-2484
Meets 2nd Tuesday at 10:00 a.m.
1911 S. Indiana, Chicago

COOK SOUTH DCFS REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Contact: Ann Buckingham at 773-723-5349
Meets 3rd Wednesday at 10:00 a.m.
Meetings rotate between DCFS Harvey and
Emerald offices, call for details.

HISPANIC ASSOCIATION

(COMBINES WITH NORTH EAST FOSTER PARENT ASSOC.)
Contact: Edith Cruz at 773-425-4634

HULL HOUSE ASSC. FOSTER PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

Contact: Pam White at 773-374-9451, ext 136
Meets 2nd Tuesday at 10:00 a.m.
8753 S. Greenwood, Chicago

ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON ADOPTABLE CHILDREN

Contact: Pat Cooper at 847-698-3668
Meets four times a year, call for schedule
Niles Township Hall
5255 Main St., Skokie

NATIVE AMERICAN FOSTER PARENTS ASSOCIATION

Contact: Dale Francisco at 773-784-9305
Meets monthly, call for details

NORTH EAST AREA FOSTER PARENT ASSOC.

Contact: Donsetta Blakely at 773-778-7445
Meets 3rd Thursday at 10:00 a.m.
Sherman Park Library
5440 S. Racine Avenue, Chicago

NORTHERN ILLINOIS FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

Contact: Kathy Bilbo at 773-866-5686
Call for schedule/location details.

NORTH WEST SUBURBAN ASSOCIATION

Contact: Sandra Reinhard at 847-255-8783
Meets 2nd Wednesday at 9:30 a.m.
Arlington Countryside Church
916 E. Hintz Rd., Arlington Heights

REACH OUT OF NORTHERN IL

Contact: Debbie Perez, Pres. At 847-566-4316
Meets 1st Tuesday of each month at 6:15 PM
Warren Township Library
224 N. O'Plain Road, Gurnee

SOUTH CITY FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION

Contact: Carol Lukacek, 708-891-2206
Meets 2nd Thursday at 10:00 a.m.
DCFS 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago

YOUTH CAMPUS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Contact: Debra Pinkett at 312-243-0533
Meets every other month
901 W. Jackson Chicago, IL 60607

Someone you should know...

Meet Cook North Regional Nurse Amanda Ellis

Amanda Ellis has been working with the Department since 1993 as one of our clinical nurses. She is a registered nurse, has a Master's degree in Health Service Administration and a Bachelor's in psychology. Prior to becoming a nurse, Amanda worked with teens at Maryville Academy. She became a nurse because she really wanted to take care of people, especially teenagers.



In her role as a nurse with DCFS, Amanda works to support foster parents and caseworkers who are caring for medically complex children and children with mental health issues. Amanda visits children in hospitals to support foster parents and caseworkers in understanding their medical needs and advocating for proper treatment. She may review records, speak with doctors or attend hospital staffings. She participates in clinical staffings, Help Unit staffings, and often works and visits families to be sure that they have the skills, supplies and equipment necessary to care for their children.

What Amanda loves most about her job is working with our kids and foster parents. She prefers this work to hospital work because in her current role she gets to know and enjoy children and families as she educates, as opposed to treating and releasing them from a hospital setting. She is very appreciative of those foster parents who provide for children with special needs and is always amazed by their willingness to go that extra mile and make the children a part of their family.

Cook North office on Western moves to new location



In April, the DCFS office at 4055 N. Western relocated to 2500 W. Bradley Place. The central phone number remains 773-866-5500. Direct lines for staff also stayed the same. The new location will provide improved office space for staff, larger conference rooms for community meeting and rooms for visitation. The DCFS clothing closet is also located at the new facility.

Foster parents ask for and receive special training sessions offered locally

Watch the mail for announcements of upcoming trainings for Cook North foster parents. Based on the recommendations of foster parents, each of the region's three offices will be developing monthly trainings specific to foster parent needs. Topics that will be addressed include support services, and mandated reporting and documentation and record keeping. The actual schedules will be mailed to all Cook North supervised homes. Private agency families in the region can also attend these classes. Contact your licensing representative with questions or call the regional office near you.



Cook North Cares and You Make the Difference...

The staff of the Cook North region wanted to pass along some of the sentiments that were expressed in recognition of all the care and commitment foster families offer children.

“I have a very special place in my heart for our families who open their homes and hearts to our children and families.”

—Ernestine Jeffries, Family Development Specialist

“A good foster parent is an invaluable resource and fortunately most of ours are invaluable.”

—Carol Jones, Supervisor

“Thank you for the job that you do and the source of inspiration that you are to others who support our kids and families.”

—Lucille Pearson, Social Service Community Planner

“I want to thank all of the foster parents who take in children with special needs and who go that extra step to see that the children’s needs are met, but most importantly to those that see that they fit in and become a part of their families.”

—Kennedy Shenberg, Child Welfare Specialist II

“We appreciate the patience our families show our children coming from troubled environments and the families’ understanding of their needs for warmth, care and consideration.”

—Yvonne Lewis, Child Welfare Specialist III

“We should continually respect and recognize our foster parents for their willingness to open their homes and providing patience and understanding to our children in crisis.”

—Lisa Timberlake, Supervisor

“Foster parents are some great people who step up to improve a child or family’s life, and we specifically should recognize those who continue to work and support birth families when children are returned home.”

—Gloria Pounds, Supervisor

“Without the support of our foster parents our jobs would be much more difficult.”

—Jackie Bright, Program Manager

“Our foster parents are the key to our children’s success.”

—Mamie Robinson, Clinical Manager

On behalf of the staff and administration of Cook North, we thank all of the foster parents for their hard work, dedication and commitment to providing quality services to our children and families.

Englewood adoptive families find fun and help with new group

Families in the Englewood and West Englewood neighborhoods will be able to enjoy a new program sponsored by DCFS to meet the parental and social needs that can arise with adoption. A new support group has been formed to serve adoptive parents and children in Local Area Network (LAN) 79. The group is run by Catholic Charities, Metropolitan Family Services and Chicago Commons Mary Dowell Settlement. Families meet for six weeks during which time parents and children can learn more about how adoption can impact a family, have fun at events around the city and even take time for some self-pampering.

“One week the group had a session with a Mary Kay consultant. You would not believe the relief that came from mothers who hadn’t thought about lipstick for months,” said Program Coordinator Jacquelyn Huckabee.

The support group addresses several aspects of family life. While the adults meet, there are simultaneous activities for adolescents and young children. Families are encouraged and provided with tools to enjoy themselves at recreational events. For families in crisis, there is also a respite program available to give parents a necessary break from the action.

Questions about registration can be directed to Jacquelyn Huckabee at 312-655-7084.

Cook South staff and families work together for re-accreditation



During February and March the Council on Accreditation (COA), an international, independent, not-for-profit human service accrediting organization reviewed the Cook South Foster Care and Adoption program for re-accreditation. The Council on Accreditation promotes best practice standards; champions quality services for children, youth, and families; and advocates for the value of accreditation. The process involved a review of our case records and interviews with our staff, foster parents, adoptive parents, and community agencies that work with us. Cook South would like to thank all of our foster and adoptive parents who participated in the interview process. The interviews played a major part in helping the interviewers evaluate our program.

In their Exit Conference with our Harvey Office, the COA interviewers commented that our foster and adoptive parents were a dynamic group of people who have opened their hearts and homes to the children of this state. The staff here at Cook South echo that sentiment. They also spoke of the partnering relationship that you feel you have with the staff here at Cook South, and that you feel that you are part of the team that works for the safety and well-being of the children.

As you know, foster and adoptive parents are vital to the success of this program. Without your support and input we could not continue to provide safety and permanency for children and continue to strive for excellence. The staff at Cook South are fortunate to have such a wonderful group of foster parents.

Older caregivers find support and assistance to raise children

COOK SOUTH

The child welfare system has long depended on the experience of older foster parents to answer the call to take care of children in need. However, for many caregivers who are advanced in age, there can come challenges that require more attention and assistance to make sure that children can thrive in a safe and stable setting. The Older Caregiver Program offered by Metropolitan Family Services with DCFS and the Inspector General's Office, can provide an extra layer of support for parents aged 60 and older who are raising children or grandchildren.

The goal of the program is to establish a stronger support system that will help the caregiver continue to meet the needs of the child in their care. When this is not possible, the program will help caregivers look to the extended family to make new and more appropriate arrangements.

The Older Caregiver Program is serving families living in Chicago's South Side within zip codes: 60609, 60615, 60617, 60619, 60620, 60621, 60628, 60629, 60636, 60637, 60643, 60649 and 60653. The program will help families by:

- Assessing the individual and the family's parenting strengths and needs
- Providing services for children that assure their long-term safety and stability
- Giving caregivers and children a sense of security by creating a sound plan in the event of the caregivers' death or incapacity.
- Assisting caseworkers at all levels to create better permanency plans

Metropolitan Family Services senior specialists will work with the caregivers to make connections to resources such as homemakers, meals on wheels and transportation services. Meanwhile, the child welfare specialists will look at all areas of the child's life to evaluate medical and mental health concerns, educational performance, social skills and daily functioning. The Family Conference Mediation process brings together extended family, friends, neighbors and others to develop a transition plan should the current parent become ill or die. The specialists can also help answer questions about housing and financial concerns such as tax breaks, budgeting, credit repair and saving for future financial goals.

Interested foster, adoptive or guardianship parents aged 60 or older, should discuss this program with their caseworker to determine if a referral is appropriate.

Kid Start combines after-school and job opportunities on website

Chicago KidStart is an initiative announced by Mayor Daley to pull all the programs offered to children outside the school day together under one banner - KidStart.

The KidStart website www.chicagokidstart.org is a source of all programmatic information on opportunities in the out-of-school hours for Chicago's youth, including school programs, academic and community service opportunities, internships and jobs. Log onto the website and search for internships and activities by using your zip code. The KidStart website allows you to find positive activities in your neighborhood. CareerBuilder.com joined forces with KidStart, to obtain more employers to establish an internship or to hire youth through this program. Young people can use the KidStart Summer Youth program to find summer employment and pre-internships. The on-line application is available to Chicago residents aged 14 to 21.



Cook County Training Calendar

FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend any or all of the PRIDE In-Service Trainings to enhance their skills and meet yearly training requirements.

Module 1 - *The Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children* (Four 3-hour sessions = 12 training hours)

Module 2 - *Using Discipline to Protect and Nurture* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hrs.)

Module 3 - *Addressing Developmental Issues Related to Sexuality* (One 3-hour session = 3 training hours)

Module 4 - *Responding to the Signs and Symptoms of Sexual Abuse* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 5 - *Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 6 - *Working as a Professional Team Member* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hrs.)

Module 7 - *Promoting Children's Personal and Cultural Identity* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 8 - *Promoting Permanency Outcomes* (Three 3-hours sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 9 - *Managing the Impact of Placement on Your Family* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 10 - *Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children & Families* (Five 3-hour sessions = 15 training hours)

COOK SOUTH

		Module
DCFS South Area Office		
June 16, 18 & 23 (Mon/Wed)	6:30-9:30 p.m.	5
June 10, 12 & 17 (Tues/Thurs)	6:30-9:30 p.m.	6
June 14 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.	7
June 21 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.	9

COOK CENTRAL

		Module
Association House (SPANISH)		
June 21 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.	8
June 28 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	8

COOK NORTH

For the summer training schedule, please contact the Harold Washington College at 312-553-5821.

All classes are coordinated by Harold Washington College in Chicago.

Call 312-553-5821 or -3031 to register.

Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/ Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

COOK SOUTH

ABJ Community Services	
June 28 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
DCFS South Area Office	
June 7 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
June 12 & 17 (Thurs/Tues)	6:30-9:30 p.m.
Harvey	
June 21 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
June 23 & 25 (Mon/Wed)	6:30-9:30 p.m.

COOK CENTRAL

Association House (SPANISH)	
June 7 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Sequin Services	
June 23 & 25 (Mon/Wed)	5:30-8:30 p.m.

COOK NORTH

Harold Washington College	
June 7 (Sat)	9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Things to think about...

*"Friends are angels who lift us to our feet
when our wings have trouble remembering how to fly."*

*"There is no beginning or end.
Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is mystery. Today is a gift."*

*"Whenever I approach a child, his presence inspires two feelings in me;
Affection for what he is now, and
respect for what he may one day become"*

-Louis Pasteur